

## Topic | Social Media

### Tutorial 44

# Twitter For Tourism

*Twitter is a great tool for businesses looking to attract new customers and increase visibility of their branding. By creatively utilising the 140-character limit you can direct traffic to your business and join in on the conversation.*

**Reading time:** 35 minutes

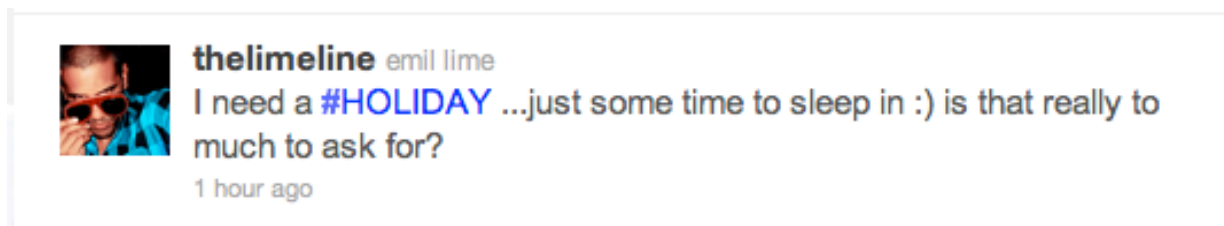
**Prerequisite:** None



## 1. What is Twitter and how can it help tourism businesses?

Established in 2006, Twitter is a popular social networking site (also considered a micro blogging site) where registered users can post short messages (known as tweets) as well as photos, videos and links. These short messages are posted on your Twitter profile and visible to anyone including search engines.

JUST LIKE FACEBOOK, TWITTER OFFERS A NEW AND EXCITING OPPORTUNITY TO TIME-POOR TOURISM BUSINESSES WHO WANT TO ENGAGE WITH THEIR AUDIENCE FOR FREE, ON THEIR OWN TERMS.



### a) What are the benefits to my business?

One of the main benefits of Twitter is that it is very easy to use. The main feature is a short message often compared to an SMS.

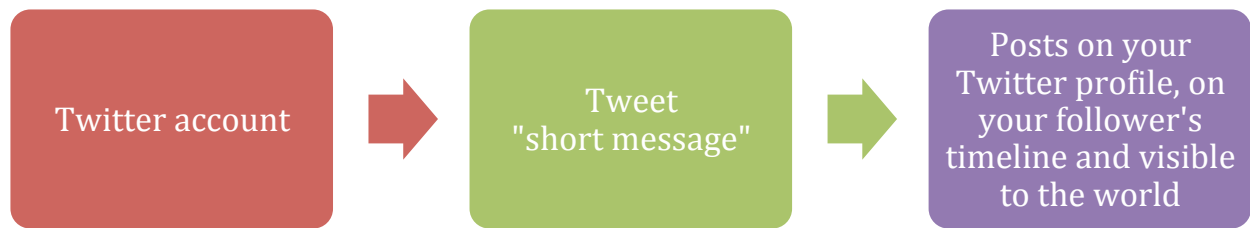
Apart from its simplicity, Twitter offers many advantages such as:

1. It allows your business to tweet – which can include posting photos and/or links – on the site **in a matter of seconds, for free**. This is very important as more people are now using social media to search for holiday destinations and experiences
2. You can configure these tweets to be automatically posted on other social networks such as Facebook and your website **giving your communication more exposure**
3. Majority of the news media are using Twitter to search for new stories and encourage public feedback
4. Twitter can also be used to **gather intelligence on specific topics** e.g. to learn about “internet marketing for tourism”.

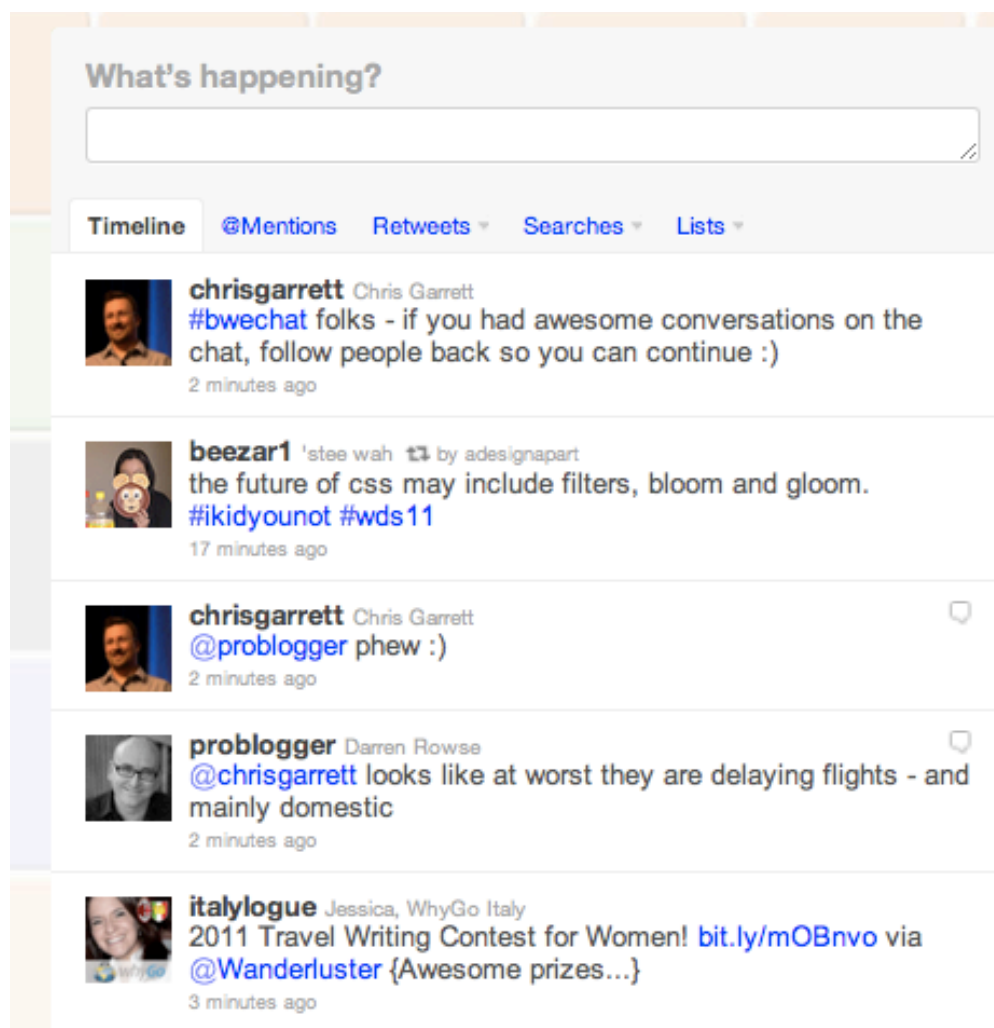
TWITTER RANKS HIGHLY WITH SEARCH ENGINES ENABLING SOME USERS' PROFILES TO APPEAR HIGHER IN GOOGLE'S SEARCH RESULTS.

### b) In a few words, how does Twitter work?

Twitter allows people to set up free Twitter accounts. You might like to set up one for yourself and one for your business. Once your account is set up, you can use Twitter's website, any one of the numerous programs such as TweetDeck ([www.tweetdeck.com](http://www.tweetdeck.com)) or any Twitter smartphone/iPhone application.



Once you write your message it will be posted on your Twitter profile as well as on the timeline of your followers. For those of you who are familiar with Facebook, the Twitter timeline (example below) could be compared to your Facebook newsfeed. Your message will also be indexed by the Twitter search engines and other engines such as Google; thus becoming findable on the web.



If your message is of interest to a Twitter user they may decide to follow you and receive your tweets in the future.

Twitter also offers direct messages (private messages) and other functionalities such as retweets (reposting your message on their timeline – similar to an email’s “forward” functionality).

### c) *The Twitter jargon*

The Twitter lingo isn't as intuitive as some of the other social media platforms. It is therefore important to clarify the jargon:

- **@ symbol** – Called the Twitter handle, this symbol identifies a Twitter user. For instance, ATDW's Twitter handle is @ATDW. If you wish to address your Tweet to ATDW you need to include the @ATDW in your tweet:

*E.g. "@ATDW, we loved the latest photos posted on your Facebook Page! Can we join the party next time?"*

- **Tweet** – is a message containing 140 characters or less posted on Twitter (the above example is called a tweet)
- **Retweet** – When someone enjoyed your tweet, they can forward it to their followers by using the retweet option. When you manually retweet a message, it should begin with RT followed by the message.

*E.g. "RT @ATDW, we loved the latest photos posted on your Facebook Page! Can we join the party next time?"*

- **Message** (used to be called Direct Message) - is a private message to a recipient. Keep in mind, you cannot send a direct message to a user who is not following you. A quick way to send a direct message to one of your followers is to add a D in front of their username and drop the @ followed by your message:

*E.g. "D ATDW sending you a private message that no one else can see"*

- **#** – Called a hashtag, this symbol is used in tweets to mark key words or topics. It was created organically by Twitter users as a way to categorise messages for later reference:

*E.g. "@ATDW I saw you on the #localnews today"*

All of the symbols above can be used on Twitter's website or on Twitter supported programs. They sound tricky at first but after a few minutes they become second nature to any user.

## 2. How do I set up my account in just ten minutes?

Before you can take advantage of the many benefits of this wonderful communication tool you need to set up a Twitter account. We have outlined the key steps to get you started below. Further information can be found here: <https://support.twitter.com/entries/100990-how-to-sign-up-on-twitter>

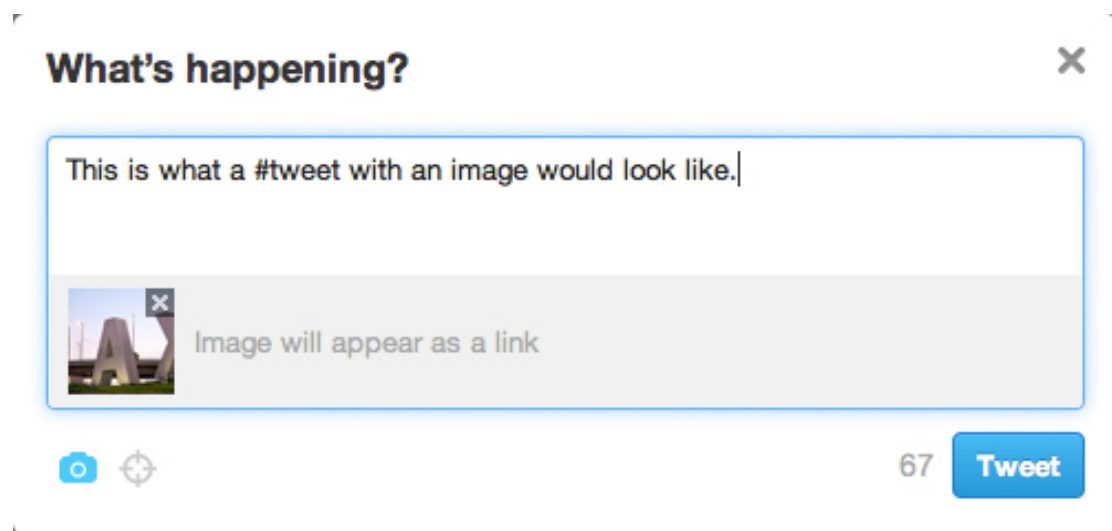
1. **Sign up** for a free Twitter account at its homepage [www.twitter.com](http://www.twitter.com)

2. **Fill in your profile details.** Note: if you are signing up in your company's name, use your domain name or business name as the username if it's practical to do so. Your Twitter handle will then become @yourbusinessname
3. **Look for potential followers** through existing email or other social network contacts. Twitter will allow you to find users through such means as Gmail or LinkedIn. This is a great place to begin collecting followers and following your existing contacts.
4. Use Twitter's function to **locate and follow like-minded users.** Look to follow feeds of like-minded organisations or groups.

### a) *How do I send my first tweet?*

This is very simple and will only take you a couple of minutes.

1. Visit [www.twitter.com](http://www.twitter.com) and ensure you are logged into your account
2. On the homepage, type your message into the box on the left that says "Compose new Tweet..." or click on the blue button with a feather on the top right to post a message. You can even click on the little camera to add a picture:



3. You can do the same from other programs or from your smartphone

### b) *What else can I see on the home tab of my Twitter account?*

On the top left of your homepage, will see numbers in different columns. They may look similar to the below and provide you with a nice summary of your Twitter account. It won't take you long to grow your number of followers once you start tweeting!

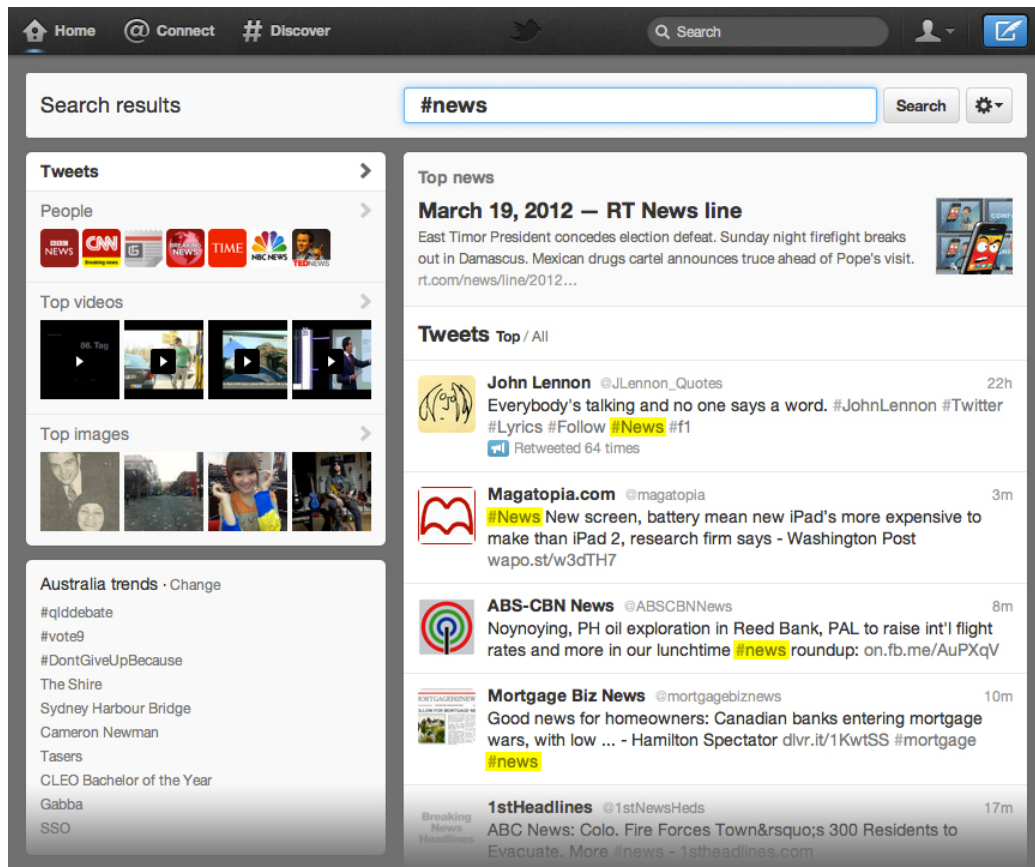


- The “tweets” number is self-explanatory and represents the number of tweets that you have sent
- The “following” number represents the number of people you are following
- The “followers” number represents the number of people following you

### **c) *How do I search for leads on Twitter?***

As mentioned above, Twitter and search engines index everyone’s tweets which allows for an easy way to find up to date information on any topic you wish. For instance, the Twitter search engine is a powerful tool to search for potential business leads. By using Twitter’ search, you can either:

- Follow common industry topics or brands using hashtags (#) (e.g. #news). The below screenshots provides an example of how to search for a hashtag and the results. The hasthtags in red within the post.



- Search for more detailed terms and interest groups that could lead you to potential clients.



- Other third party applications, such as TweetDeck ([www.tweetdeck.com](http://www.tweetdeck.com)) use an enhanced interactive dashboard, making searching for business leads even easier. Following other Twitter accounts in the tourism industry should allow you to see the people who follow them. This is important if you're looking for potential customers to direct to your own Twitter account.

### d) *How do I tweet effectively?*

Once you have sent a few tweets you may wonder what else you could share with the world using Twitter. The trick to effective tweeting is:

- To provide useful content
- To engage in conversation with your followers

#### **Providing useful content**

An effective Twitter action plan should concentrate on providing regular informative updates. Remember that one of the key ideas behind business use of Twitter is to initiate a conversation with potential customers.

*Potential customers may use a Twitter search to look for information about activities in the region. This may include details on weather, festivals, sporting events, markets, bushwalks etc. as well as a brief history of the region. These should therefore be covered in your Twitter feed's regular updates. For instance you could tweet about today's surf conditions just like @ApartmentsInn did.*



The best way to start with Twitter updates is to set up automated reminders about tweeting in your calendar (Outlook, Google, diary or wall calendar). Start with four a week and see how quick and easy it is.

IF YOU HAVE MASTERED THIS YOU CAN MOVE ONTO TOOLS SUCH AS [WWW.HOOTSUITE.COM](http://WWW.HOOTSUITE.COM) THAT ALLOW YOU TO PRE-WRITE YOUR TWEETS AND AUTOMATICALLY PUBLISH THEM AT PREDETERMINED DATES.

#### **Engage in conversation**

This can be a little bit more time consuming – approximately 5 minutes per day! Once you start tweeting you will see that:

- People start to respond (which is fantastic as this is why you are tweeting in the first place)
- You might come across and follow some very interesting people and businesses and might gain knowledge that wouldn't be accessible otherwise. For instance, you could learn about eco-certification and new practices overseas.

Once you reach this level of engagement you will really appreciate tools such as TweetDeck that will beep just like a telephone on your computer and inform you when someone is asking you a question via Twitter (they might want to check if you still have seats available on tomorrow's tour).

### 3. Time-saving Twitter applications for business

You may want to try the ever-growing number of Twitter applications. The website Twittereye (<http://www.twittereye.com>) offers a full list of applications, their functions and instructions on how to use them. Three applications with relevance to small tourism business owners are Twitpic, TweetDeck and Hootsuite.

- **Twitpic** (<http://www.twitpic>) is a website which allows you to share photos or videos from the site, your smartphone or email. Tweeting pictures regularly could greatly benefit your business as it should serve to attract more customers to your destination.
- **TweetDeck** ([www.tweetdeck.com](http://www.tweetdeck.com)) and **Hootsuite** ([www.hootsuite.com](http://www.hootsuite.com)) are both very useful if you run a number of Twitter feeds or would like to integrate other accounts such as Facebook. Keeping accounts updated, monitoring feedback and searching for leads can become cumbersome in this situation. Both TweetDeck and Hootsuite are recommended applications and act as social media dashboards that allow the user to analyse, interact and monitor across a number of accounts.

### 4. Twitter case study Cairns Holiday Homes

Companies both large and small are now using Twitter to help them advertise their business and control their brand message. An example of the smaller operator using the technology well is the feed run by the Queensland holiday company Cairns Holiday Homes.

A link to the Twitter feed is clearly labelled on the company's website. The account is regularly updated and combines information with specials and available lodging for potential tourists in an accessible, conversational way (<http://twitter.com/#!/cnsholidayhomes>).



**Cairns Holiday Homes**  
@CnsHolidayHomes  
Fully furnished Holiday Houses, apartments & studios for rent in the Cairns area. Short term rental welcome too.  
<http://www.facebook.com/cairnsholidayhomes>  
Cairns · <http://www.cairnsholidayhomes.com.au>

Follow 1,498 TWEETS  
267 FOLLOWING  
318 FOLLOWERS

**Tweet to Cairns Holiday Homes**  
@CnsHolidayHomes

**Tweets**

- Following
- Followers
- Favorites
- Lists
- Recent images

**Tweets**

- Cairns Holiday Homes** @CnsHolidayHomes 2h  
Run 10km ? Its all about choice! Via @HumbirdsSong [hummingbirdssong.com/2012/03/secret...](http://hummingbirdssong.com/2012/03/secret...)
- Cairns Holiday Homes** @CnsHolidayHomes 17 Mar  
#HappyStPatricksDay to all who are Irish, have a little of the Irish in them, or just want to be Irish for the Day! [pic.twitter.com/DIFci1kK](http://pic.twitter.com/DIFci1kK)  
[View photo](#)
- Cairns Holiday Homes** @CnsHolidayHomes 16 Mar  
Jetstar Friday Fare Frenzy [jetstar.com/au/en/special-...](http://jetstar.com/au/en/special-...) Cairns Sydney from \$79 one way (Booking Service fee and checked bags are extra)
- Cairns Holiday Homes** @CnsHolidayHomes 15 Mar  
@SaltHouseCairns A Taxi would do !  
[In reply to Salt House](#)

Aimed clearly at travellers considering a visit to Tropical North Queensland, the Twitter account engages with its potential visitors in a welcoming and informative manner. The tone and style of the feed is one that could be replicated across a number of similar tourism operations.

## 5. How to measure my Twitter strategy effectiveness?

There are different tools such as [www.Twitalyzer.com](http://www.Twitalyzer.com) that allow you to visualise your tweets, followers and mentions on the Internet.

Twitter announced in September 2011 that it plans on rolling out Twitter Web Analytics to a group of pilot users and will shortly release it to the Twitter community. This tool is still under development and is yet to be made available to all website owners.

<https://dev.twitter.com/blog/introducing-twitter-web-analytics>.

It is recommended that you always focus on simple measures to monitor success on a monthly basis. Start with focusing on the first three below (retweets, @yourusername and visitors to the links):

- **Retweets:** E.g. three tweets were retweeted three times each over a one-month period. That is a total of nine retweets per month.
- **@yourusername replies and mentions** - E.g. “@ATDW yes I agree the tourism ekit is an essential tool for tourism businesses”
- **Visitor traffic to the links you posted in your tweets** - Twitter platforms such as TweetDeck allow you to use different types of URL shortening services (such as bit.ly) to allow you to shorten those character count hungry URLs. If you use such a service you can then access data (e.g. number of times the URL was clicked) to understand how popular your content was
- **Number of followers** – The number of followers isn’t always good measure as anyone

can follow you on Twitter and they may never wish to interact with you or your content. However, if you have just started to use Twitter it could be a good measure to use at the beginning.

### 6. Tips and tricks

Once a Twitter account has been set up, many account users look to then attract followers in a cost effective way.

- An easy way to achieve this is to put a **Twitter badge or link on your website**, directing traffic from your site to your Twitter feed. As long as the viewer is signed into their Twitter account, the distance from the site to being a follower of your Twitter feed is a mere two clicks.
- Another good way to make visitors aware of your Twitter page is **to place a sign in your business with your Twitter handle**.
- To increase the chances of your posts being seen by people who are not following you, **use the hashtag (#)** before a descriptive reference name, which follows your post.

*For example if you are located in the Blue Mountains you could use # followed immediately by the region and tourism (eg #bluemountains). The hashtag means potential customers searching under this hashtag are likely to find your post.*

Used effectively, Twitter could be a powerful marketing tool for your tourism related business. And to end on an even more encouraging note, marketing your business on Twitter is *free*.

### 7. Key learning outcomes

- Twitter is a great tool to communicate quickly with the world and potential customers
- It takes less than 10 minutes to setup a Twitter account
- Using hashtags (#) will help focus your tweets to your selected audience. You can even search using hashtags to find conversations to join
- There are a number of management tools available for businesses looking to manage multiple accounts or schedule tweets
- Twitter accounts should be promoted both online and in your physical storefront

[All sceencaptures twitter.com](#)

### 8. Related material

#### a) Related tutorials

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- Social media for tourism

#### b) Related websites

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- <https://business.twitter.com>

- <https://support.twitter.com>